

SS

In Strictest Confidence

Copy No 5

CASG(97)3rd
CASG97/13 to 17COUNTER AUTOMATION STEERING GROUP23 JULY 1997

Present:

John Roberts (Chairman)
Jerry Cope
Mena Rego
Paul Rich
Stuart Sweetman
Scott Childes (notes)*Hold for
planned meeting
in Kevin Todd/AJR*

APOLOGIES

Richard Close and Peter Crahan were unable to attend

MINUTES OF
PREVIOUS
MEETING

CASG97/13

The Committee APPROVED the minutes of its meeting of 2 May 1997MATTERS ARISING
CASG(97)4
Horizon: High Level
Time-table (CASG97/9)

CASG97/14

The Committee noted the paper and in particular that

(i) Pathway had yet to reply to Peter Crahan's letter seeking confirmation of their previous verbal acceptance of blame for the latest series of programme delays. To enable programme planning to continue without prejudice to contractual arrangements and the possibility of any future legal action, a letter drafted by the Programme lawyers acting on behalf of BA and POCL, had been sent to Pathway

HORIZON: HIGH
LEVEL TIME-TABLE
CASG(97)6

CASG97/15

The Committee noted that

- (i) following an internal audit of Pathway programme plans by ICL the Benefit Card Payment Service release had been deferred from the end of June to October 1997. Whilst the PDA felt this date was achievable there were still some risks around it and they were recommending a number of check points along the way and the production of a contingency plan that could be evoked if there were early warning signs;
- (ii) additionally, the release date for Automated Payment and Electronic Point of Sale Services (EPOSS) had been deferred until March 1998. However, the PDA was recommending a more detailed review of supporting plans before agreeing to this proposed date change;

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- (iii) this release still incorporated a major link to CAPS and given the delay already experienced it was important that POCL had contingency plans in place which would allow AP/EPOSS to proceed separately if necessary

noted in discussion that

- (iv) ICL had taken steps to reassure POCL about their ability to deliver the programme and had drafted in additional senior resource to work on technical issues. A number of interim project milestones had also been created against which progress could be monitored;

- (v) it was recognised that having completed the programme of installation much of the equipment would be technically outdated. It was also possible that during roll-out technological advances would make an alternative methodology more attractive; this would be a difficult management issue. Given the delays with roll-out the opportunity for a strategic review of the programme was being exploited; it was, however, important to deliver a stable working system and not be diverted by promises of what technological advances might do;

- (vi) notwithstanding the work ICL had carried out on improving project control, it was probably an opportune moment for John Roberts, in his capacity as Chief Executive, to meet the Chief Executive of ICL, to reassure himself, on behalf of the Post Office Board, that ICL could actually deliver all that was being promised. A presentation by ICL would hopefully provide this reassurance and give both parties the opportunity to demonstrate the commercial importance and significance of Horizon. The commercial aspect which 'united' POCL and Pathway was not an issue for the BA who actually had the means to pursue different options, without infringing contract obligations. Given this it was important that the meeting with Pathway was not perceived by them or the BA as being in any way conspiratorial;

- (vii) courier would be used to communicate the re-prioritisation of the programme and why this had been necessary. Similar material would be published in the 'Subpostmaster'

Invited Paul Rich to prepare a letter on behalf of John Roberts, inviting the Chief Executive of ICL to a meeting at which he should present ICL's perception of current and future programme issues. Although John Roberts would take advice on the timing of such a meeting, it was likely to be sometime in September.

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HORIZON: LESSONS
LEARNT TO DATE
CASG(97)5

CASG97/16

The Committee noted that

- (i) on a recent visit to Counters South West Region John Roberts had been encouraged by the level of enthusiasm for Horizon, however, he had also formed the clear impression that communication of emerging issues could be improved, and was concerned that both the positive and negative lessons that had to date emerged, were being acted upon

noted in discussion that
- (ii) whilst a number of established processes were in place they tended to be poorly integrated. However, a significant improvement in management of the overall implementation process was expected to be achieved as a result of the recent decision to bring responsibility for national implementation back into POCL and the appointment of a National Implementation Manager within POCL to improve focus/control. Some process improvements had already been agreed with Pathway but would not be tested till the next phase of Live Trial;
- (iii) with regard to communications POCL faced two main obstacles: a great reluctance on the part of DSS to make any announcements whatsoever due to political sensitivity, and the number of contractual and policy issues which needed clarification before the business could provide soundly based information/advice. The pilot exercise would provide a useful insight into the issues that were likely to emerge and having encountered and overcome these they would not be expected to reoccur. Whilst the scale of Horizon, combined with the work needed to deal effectively with the migration of POCL systems to the new technology, was acknowledged as being both technically and intellectually challenging, it had to be remembered that without first having successfully implemented Horizon, there would be no need to migrate other operations;
- (iv) the business appreciated that the focus of its activities had to be on successful implementation, however, as offices were rolled out there would be an increasing need for the migration of other processes and work in this area was therefore underway;
- (v) resourcing the implementation task force remained a key issue with the business possibly having to seek assistance from external agencies and utilise suitable surplus staff from the other businesses;

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- (vi) market research carried out in pilot offices had been very encouraging with the majority of staff happy with the installation process and the operation of equipment

DATE OF NEXT
MEETING

CASG97/17

The Committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 15 September 1997, at 2pm.

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